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# WORKING FAR AWAY FROM HOME:

***EXPLORING FACTORS BEHIND TAJIK EXTERNAL  
LABOUR MIGRATION***

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## Abstract

International labour migration is claimed to be the dominant type of international movement of people in the modern world which is characterized by the process of globalization. Tajikistan is one of the countries for which external labour emigration is of crucial importance. Hence, this qualitative study focuses on identifying how labour migration from this country is shaped. It highlights the factors which are behind the decisions of Tajik nationals to seek employment abroad. In order to answer the research question a number of unstructured interviews with Tajik migrant workers and their direct family members were conducted. The study resulted in a structured analysis of macro-, local- and human agency factors behind the external labour emigration from Tajikistan and its sustainability as well as schematic presentation of those factors in a coherent framework. The analysis was done using the structuration model of international migration. The interdependence of various factors is discussed as well. The study suggests that the case of Tajik external labour migration is driven by a complex framework of factors. Despite the obvious importance of the economic reasons driving migration the relevance of other factors is of not less significance. The structuration model can be used in order to track how the changes within a particular factor impact other factors and the whole framework. Such approach is particularly relevant for Tajikistan within the changing context of international economic relations.

**Key words:** external labour migration, structuration model of international migration, macro-, local- and individual level factors of migration, Tajikistan.

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## List of abbreviations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LUMID	Lund University Master of Science in International Development and Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

***“We don’t want to leave but we are forced to...”***

(male respondent, 28 years old)

## **1. Introduction**

Millions of people have been migrating for centuries. They have been moving within their native countries’ borders, as well as between states and continents. Some of those movements were forced by life threatening circumstances such as conflicts, wars, oppression, natural disasters, *etc.* while others were driven by conscious choices, made in search for better life, for instance, driven by economic reasons. Notwithstanding that the phenomena of international migration is not new, it has for many decades been considered that international migration has had a negative impact on both receiving and sending countries. However, the focus has recently changed. More and more international organisations and academia see it as a factor which contributes to development of both countries of destination and countries of departure. Much attention in this regard is given to the international labour migration which has become an integral part of the globalization process and a linking mechanism of the global economy. It is argued that the countries of destination benefit from knowledge, skills and new perspectives which are brought by immigrants, while the countries of origin get money transfers which are sent back home by migrants in the form of remittances.

Although scholars argue about the impact of remittances on the receiving countries, with the pessimists stating that remittance receiving countries experience a significant outflow of human and physical capital (Adenutsi, 2009; De Haas, 2010). They also become prone to Dutch disease, a phenomenon of macroeconomic instability often caused by inflationary pressures (Chami, et al., 2008; Adenutsi, 2009). Developmental optimists, on the contrary, believe that the flow of generated economic capital will stimulate the capital constrained economies, and facilitate the development using the international remittances to finance the eventual economic growth (Adenutsi, 2009; UNDP, 2011: 131-133).

Nevertheless, there is a consensus among scholars that remittances, sent home by international labour migrants, reduce poverty (San Vicente Portes, 2009: 128). Therefore, it is important to note that Tajikistan has recently topped the list of countries whose GDP largely depend on remittances (World Bank, 2015: 5; OECD, 2015: 29).

Almost every family in Tajikistan is reportedly touched by international labour migration (Justino and Shemyakina, 2012: 9). This phenomenon provides a fruitful basis for research given the multiple aspects it involves. One of such aspects is the reasons which stand behind the motivation of local population to seek employment abroad. Although the economic character of Tajik labour mobility seems to be on the surface, the issue is believed to be much more complex and comprehensive. Thus, my scientific interest lied in looking into the comprehensive system of factors

forcing external labour migration from Tajikistan including its individual subjective dimension via learning the migrants' and their families' perspective of the problem.

This defined the purpose of the thesis which was to study the factors driving external labour migration from Tajikistan and forcing its nationals to travel abroad in search of employment. I decided to center my thesis on the circumstances which create the grounds for external migration from Tajikistan and motivate Tajiks to initiate the movement. I also planned to systematize received knowledge so it could be easy to use later. Hence, I formulated my research question as:

*“How is external labour migration from Tajikistan shaped and which factors mobilize Tajik migrants to take part in it?”*

In order to answer the research question the factors behind Tajik labour emigration were scrutinized in their variety and complexity. The systematic analysis of the factors, driving workers outside of Tajikistan, employed a structuration model of international migration suggested by Ewa Morawska (2007). According to the model, the migration context was analysed through different layers which, throughout the time- and space- scale, motivated migrants to move. The layers included: the upper level layer related to macro-level conditions, which created the grounds for movement; the local level at which individuals, their families, households and the close surroundings were located and which influenced the decisions to move; and, finally, the individual level to which individual decisions and motivations belong. Due attention was given to the factors at the individual level since they could potentially impact the local level structures in the short term and the upper level structures in the long term, thus making all levels tightly interlinked, mutually shaping and reconstructing each other.

In order to grasp the full complexity of the studied issue a qualitative method of research was employed. In doing so the intention was to hear individual stories, get subjective views of the respondents on the matter, and then, with the help of the theoretical lens, make inductive analysis and draw corresponding conclusions.

## **1.1. Relevance**

While researching on Tajikistan I have found out that during the period of its independent existence the country has not got much attention of researchers compared to some other developing and least developed countries. The fact that it is a relatively young country added to the military conflict, which happened at the initial stage of its independence, could have probably hindered academic research on Tajikistan. Moreover, studies on external migration from the country usually touch upon the factors motivating migrants to move but do not usually focus on them explicitly, neither try they to provide systematic approach while discussing those factors.

Also the research took place at approximately the same time frame when the tension between Russia (the main destination country of the labour force from Tajikistan) and its western partners occurred. This included economic sanctions put on Russia by the European Union and the United States of America in the first half of 2014 (European Union Newsroom, n. d.; U.S. Department of State, n. d.). It is expected that the sanctions will have a continuous negative impact on both Russian economy and its labour market. In turn, recession of Russian economy will obviously affect the Tajik external labour migration.

Hence, an analysis of core factors forcing the Tajik population to work outside of their native country can help in filling in the research gap mentioned above. It can also provide a good basis for subsequent research on various aspects related to external labour migration from Tajikistan. Finally, it can possibly become a relevant basis for designing of development interventions aimed at assisting the country to improve its poverty status and mobilize its capacity to provide adequate living opportunities for its population in the face of the changing labour migration landscape.

## **1.2. Structure of the paper**

Following the introduction, chapter two of the thesis will provide the insights of the current state of international labour migration, its types and situation with international labour migration in Tajikistan. Next chapter will introduce the reader to the theoretical framework used in this research. Chapter four will describe the methodological choices used for the research. Chapter five will be devoted to the analysis of the factors behind Tajik external labour migration and will discuss the findings. Finally, the last chapter of the thesis will contain conclusions resulting from the study.

## **2. Contextual insights**

This chapter will introduce the reader to the context of international labour migration. The first section will provide the information on the current characteristics of international labour migration. The second section will discuss the types of international labour migration, while the third section will narrow down the discussion of the issue to the context of Tajikistan.

### **2.1. Characteristics of modern international labour migration**

The process of globalization in the modern world made the countries, economies, cultures around the globe interconnected and interdependent. Goods, services, capital, information, *etc.* move freely across the borders nowadays. All mentioned conditions have significantly facilitated the international movement of people who migrate in search of better opportunities in life.

According to the data provided by the United Nations the overall stock of international migrants increased from 154.2 to 231.5 million (or by 50 per cent) between 1990 and 2013 (UN, 2013: 1) with the largest increase happening in the early nineties when the Soviet Union broke up. The latter opened an opportunity to seek for better life for millions of those deprived of it earlier. At the same



time the World Bank reports some 247 million international migrants in 2013 (World Bank, 2015: 1). The majority of these people are reportedly labour migrants and their families (ILO, 2010: 15).

However, not all countries have equally benefitted from the globalization. It has also increased the gap between the rich and the poor countries, made wider the disparities between the living standards and incomes. In some countries and regions of the world there has been a negative impact on employment and livelihoods in traditional sectors of economy, thus making it a factor of increased migration processes. Hence, “when people cannot find work at home in their communities and societies they look elsewhere” (Somavia, 2001a in ILO, 2010: 14). Recent economic crises have also contributed to an increased migration pressure hitting the employment in various sectors across the globe.

Interestingly, that in contrast to the flows of goods, services and capital, international migration in general and labour migration in particular have never been specifically promoted and have become widespread phenomenon even despite the constantly tightened regulations in the recipient countries (*Ibid.*).

In the past migration used to be seen as a problem because it was considered as a consequence of insufficient development or as a threat to a given country’s development due to brain drain. On the contrary, recently the focus has shifted to considering migration as a way to reduce poverty and contribute to development in both sending and receiving countries which can be strengthened by introduction and (or) improvement of corresponding policies (*Idem*: 39-41).

Another interesting trend is that the total quantity of migrants is equally distributed between the three types of movement with South-North migration (from developing countries to developed ones) having a little bit more than one third; almost the same proportion travel between South-South and little bit less than a third move between North-North (*Ibid.*). Despite the fact that it is quite difficult to estimate the magnitude of the international labour migration since neither all countries accurately monitor the flows of migrant workers nor provide corresponding reports, the United Nations, namely International Labour Organisation (ILO), estimated that in 2010 some 44 per cent of migrant population constituted economically active migrants. Including their families, this figure represented 90 per cent (*Idem*: 18).

It is difficult to judge about the driving forces of international migration since the issue is very complex, depend on the historical context and vary from region to region and from individual case to individual case. The reasons include population pressure on scarce resources, inequality of income between the poor and the rich countries, enhanced interaction between the societies as a result of reduced cost of transport and communication, growing urbanization, established connections between the migrants who have already settled down in the host countries and those staying in their country of origin, not mentioning violation of human rights in some countries, wars,

famines, natural disasters. The global climate change is also seen to become the cause of mass movements in the future. All in all, the modern international labour migration can be explained by a lack of employment opportunities in the countries of origin, different job and human security in the countries across the globe, growing demand for high and low skilled labour in recipient countries, geographical and historical connections between the countries of origin and destination as well as overall increasing differences between different countries and regions of the world (Martin and Widgren, 2002: 6-9).

Interestingly, the situation in agriculture has also become an important economic factor driving international labour migration. For several decades there has been a noticeable movement from rural to urban areas. In poorer countries the farmers live worse than urban dwellers. This can be partially explained by the policies of those countries aimed at structural changes which required the modernization of agricultural production in order to make it more export oriented. Together with the liberalization of trade it has led to a permanent underemployment of farmers and pushed them into urban areas in search of job opportunities. Rapidly growing during the twentieth century the total number of urban population for the first time in history became bigger than the rural one in 2008, comprising of 3.3 billion people. This impacts international labour migration in the following way. Firstly, former farmers mainly occupy low skilled jobs in urban areas. Secondly, after getting the experience of transition from rural to urban areas they find it possible to make similar transition from their country of origin into a different country. The latter process is facilitated by the fact that it is easier to obtain visas and other documents for legal migration as well as to make all necessary travel arrangements in big cities or to find opportunities to migrate illegally (ILO, 2010: 19).

Freer trade has led to a replacement of industrial and agricultural production in some countries which resulted in job cuts. At the same time shortage of funds within the state programmes does not allow to create job opportunities at the same pace as unemployment grows, thus leaving people with no option of seeking for jobs in the home countries. The analysis of impact of trade policies on low-income countries have revealed that the liberalization of trade in them result in the drop of the country's real exchange rate and as a consequence increase of emigration (Faini *et al.*, 1999 in *Idem*: 19-20).

Job deficit and inability of the globalization to create job opportunities is considered one of its main failures. Under such conditions, when there are no worthy job opportunities at home, families have to make difficult decisions and send a family member abroad to be able to maintain the livelihood. Travelling individuals often sacrifice a lot leaving families behind, not participating in the upbringing of their children, sending most of the earned money home and living on possible minimum, often in tough conditions, being exposed to violation of their rights and stigma (*Ibid.*).

The difference in the age of population is another factor behind international labour migration. The population of the “Global North” is older than of the “Global South” and, despite the tendency to ageing globally, these processes happen faster in the former countries. The overall population of developing countries grows faster than the population of the developed ones either. Thus, a combination of increased life expectancy, continuous increase in the number of people above 65, continuous low birth rate and increased dependency ratio have resulted in a demand for migrant workers in many developed countries making it a driving factor of international labour migration (*Ibid.*).

In addition to the latter the fact that increased income and living standards in destination countries made local population reluctant to get employed in some jobs such as in construction, agriculture, cleaning, catering, domestic service, home care, *etc.* making them a primary niche for migrant workers. In other words globalization has also led to segmentation of markets in which secondary low skilled labour intensive jobs are filled by migrants, often irregular ones (*Ibid.*).

## 2.2. Types of international labour migration

Despite the fact that there are many ways to distinguish different groups of migrant workers, the most common way is based on the anticipated duration of stay in the country of destination. This reflects the importance of monitoring the incoming flows of people and their periods of stay to the sovereignty and security of a recipient country. Thus, workers are divided into those coming for:

- permanent migration, *i.e.* those coming for an indefinite period of stay allowed by the hosting country;
- temporary migration, *i.e.* those coming to fulfill time-bound, seasonal or project-tied jobs, *etc.* This group is often referred to as “guest workers” (ILO, 2010: 24).

Although they can be found in any job, migrant workers in most cases occupy the top and the bottom of the employment ladder. The former include high skilled professionals who travel in search of higher wages to be employed in such sectors as engineering, information and communication technologies, air and sea navigation, entertainment, *etc.* (this phenomenon is often referred to as “brain drain”). However, the contemporary international labour migration flows are dominated by workers fulfilling low skilled employment niche in the receiving countries which is left by the native workers seeking for better jobs. The sectors in the bottom of the employment ladder include construction, agriculture, a wide range of service jobs which are characterized by low wages and low skill requirements (*Idem*: 24-26).

Given the peculiarities of external labour migration from Tajikistan, it is worth noting that this study will focus on temporary international migration of workers who occupy low skilled positions in the hosting country. This will be discussed in more details in the next section.

Besides, the increase in the volumes of the temporary migration is one of the recent tendencies in the international labour migration. This is handled through introduction of policies by the destination governments which require migrant workers to leave for their countries of origin after certain duration of stay in a host country. The most popular form of temporary migration is seasonal labour migration which is understood as arrival to conduct work which is of temporary character and can be fulfilled during a specific part of the year. Typically the working period implies three to nine months. Broad introduction of temporary migration schemes is believed to be beneficial to all parties involved in the migration process, including the sending and receiving countries as well as migrant workers themselves. The former can fill in the labour shortages, thus increasing competitiveness in the global market. Besides, temporary migration creates lesser tension among the local population if they feel threatened by increasing migration flows. Countries of origin benefit from the income transferred back home in the form of remittances as well as new knowledge brought back home by the returning workers. The migrant workers themselves can sustain their livelihoods and support their families at home by escaping from unemployment in the countries of origin. They can also master their skills and gain new knowledge abroad (*Idem*: 28-31).

In regards to the importance of remittances for the countries of origin, it can be added that remittances are at the center of research in the field of the connection between migration and development since they are viewed as the main means of poverty reduction and contribution into national and regional development. World Bank data suggests that in 2014 remittances constituted 436 billion US dollars (World Bank, 2015: 1). The largest share of those was transferred to developing countries (around 325 billion US dollars) with India, China, the Philippines, Mexico and Nigeria at the top of the recipient countries list (*Idem*: 3). At the same time no less than 25 per cent of the GDP of Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Moldova consist of remittances with Tajikistan topping the list with 49 per cent (*Idem*: 5; UNDP, 2014). It is important to note that the data on remittances cannot be considered accurate since some of their share goes through informal channels such as personal contacts or unofficial intermediaries and is, thus, hard to be precisely reflected.

### **2.3. International labour migration from Tajikistan**

As mentioned earlier in the text, Tajikistan has reportedly the highest ratio of remittances to GDP, thus becoming the most remittance dependent country in the world (World Bank, 2015: 5; OECD, 2015: 29). Large inflow of remittances is sent by the numerous Tajik labour migrants working abroad. Some 800,000 of Tajik citizens left the country in 2013 (World Bank, 2014c: 18). Some sources indicate that between 80 (*Ibid.*) and 90 per cent (OECD, 2015: 34) of them travel to Russia. Hence for the purpose of this study the country of destination of Tajik labour migrants will by default be referred to Russia, unless clarified differently.

Labour emigration has been reportedly for years dominated by males workers (IOM, 2014: 7) with studies indicating the ratio from 85-87 (Olimova and Bosc, 2003: 27; Danzer *et al.*, 2013: 1; UNICEF,

2011: 5) up to 95 per cent (World Bank, 2009: 9). The vast majority of migrants are employed in low skilled positions (OECD, 2015: 36, Olimova and Bosc, 2003: 34). Migration is characterized by seasonality with its peaks in spring and summer (OECD, 2015: 33).

The phenomenon of Tajik labour migration can be partially explained by the modern history of this Central Asian country. After gaining its independence in 1991 Tajikistan passed through the years of the civil war in 1992-1997 which significantly hindered the country's development. These circumstances made it not only the poorest among its former Soviet counterparts but also among the poorest countries in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). The GDP per capita in Tajikistan constituted 1,036.6 US dollars in 2014 (World Bank, 2014b) and the country is classified as a low income country according to the World Bank's ranking (World Bank, 2014a). The current official average salary is reported to be approximately 143.68 US dollars (Statistics Agency under the President of Tajikistan, 2015; National Bank of Tajikistan, 2015).

Forced displacement, destroyed industry and agriculture, significant decline in living standards during and after the civil war created the grounds for temporary movement to other countries of the former Soviet Union. The borders were still relatively opened between them, thus contributing to international migration. The process was also facilitated by the shared culture, resemblance between education systems and fluent knowledge of Russian language by Tajiks. These migration movements, which have been happening for more than two decades, made it possible to create strong economic and social networks between Tajikistan and recipient countries (Justino and Shemyakina, 2012: 9).

Thus, starting from 1991 labour migration from Tajikistan and return inflow of remittances have become common trends. By 2005, nearly every family in Tajikistan had at some point sent at least one of their family members as an international migrant worker (IMF, 2005 in *Ibid.*).

One more aspect worth mentioning, which has contributed to Tajik labour emigration, is the demographic situation in Tajikistan. According to the official statistics the population of Tajikistan in 2013 constituted 8,161,100 people. Although the population growth dropped from 33 to 22 per cent between 1991 and 2013 it still has had a positive trend throughout those years averaging approximately 162 thousand people in 2000-2013 (Statistic Agency under the President of Tajikistan, 2013). 60 per cent of them were of working age and only 5.2 per cent above it. The working-age population of Tajikistan rose by 190 per cent between 1991 and 2013 (*Ibid.*).

To sum up, Tajik external labour force is predominantly represented by male workers who travel to Russia between spring and autumn to be employed in low skilled seasonal jobs. By winter time they return home to stay with the family until a new working season begins.

### 3. Theoretical framework

This chapter will discuss the structuration model of international migration employed by this research for the analysis of the Tajik labour emigration. Starting with a broader context, the first section will introduce the reader to several migration theories which, among others, became the basis of the above mentioned model and are important for this study. They are the basic Ravenstein's law of migration, Lee's push-pull framework, segmented labour market theory and the social network approach. The second section will discuss in details the structuration model of international migration, mention its advantages and end with its visual presentation in the form of a diagram (see Figure 1).

#### 3.1. Theoretical basis of the structuration model of international migration

As fairly stated by King (2012: 11) migration has been put into various theoretical frameworks for quite a while. Labour migration is not an exception since it is the most dominant type of international movement of people (*Idem*: 26).

Those theoretical models were also largely put under the critical perspective since they tend to provide explanation to one or several but not all aspects of multifaceted problem. Some of them touch upon macro-level factors standing behind international migration, while others focus mainly on factors typical to individual level. After a thorough study of all available theoretical frameworks Massey *et al.* (1998) concluded that neither of them exclude one another nor they lack consistency and they all "play some role in accounting for international migration in the contemporary world although different models predominate at different phases of the migration process" (*Idem*: 281 in Morawska, 2007: 11). Therefore attempts to make a more comprehensive full-fledged explanatory approach have been made (*Ibid.*).

One of them was made by Ewa Morawska (2007) who introduced a structuration model of international migration as an attempt to make comprehensive synthesis of different migration theories. In brief, the model analyses macro-level, local-level and individual level factors which force migration in their complexity and interdependency.

However, before proceeding to a more precise explanation of the model several theories which were used in designing of the structuration model and are of particular relevance to this research will be presented. They will also be referred to later in the analytical part of the paper.

"Ravenstein's laws of migration" which were formulated in the end of the XIXth century are worth noting as a starting point. One of them saying that "the major causes of migration are economic" is obviously relevant for my research since it "states a fundamental truism of most forms of migration" (King, 2012: 12). Although the abovementioned laws were more of generalization based on Ravenstein's empirical research and were related to internal migration, they later became the

ground for future theorization. For instance, it was taken as a basis for the push-pull framework used by Lee (*Ibid.*).

Lee's theory analyses the migration context using, among others, the push-pull factors forcing the movement of people. Push factors are peculiar to the country of origin while pull factors belong to the country of destination (Lee, 1966). This theory will be used to distinguish and structure the macro-level factors which stand behind the labour emigration of Tajiks.

The push-pull theory is connected to the segmented labour market theory which, in turn, will be used to describe the local-level factors within the structuration model, namely the particularities of labour market in the Russian Federation. The segmented labour market theory studies the economic characteristics of population flows between different countries, thus focusing on labour migration. The theory views the labour migration as demand based in the first place or the pull factor based. According to it, the demand is explained by the structure of the labour market in the modern highly developed economies. It is divided into two parts, consisting of a capital intensive primary sector offering well paid high skilled jobs and a labour intensive secondary sector with low paid unskilled jobs. The secondary sector of the labour market in such developed economies is usually filled by labour migrants. The reality is that the employers offering these jobs to migrants can't raise wages since it will lead to the loss of their competitiveness and force them out of business. The migrant workers, in turn, eagerly accept such wages since they can be significantly higher compared to the ones they can make in the sending country and are thus considered as a source of income, status and increased economic opportunities back home (King, 2012: 16-17; Morawska, 2007: 2-3; Massey *et al.*, 1993: 440-444).

Besides, social network approach to international migration goes as red line through the analysis of the Tajik labour migration. It is especially visible at macro- and individual levels as will be discussed in more details in the analysis below. The approach can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, it is the institutional connection between the sending country and the community of migrants of the same nationality in the receiving country which assists in and facilitates the travel, job search, provides with relevant information. On the other hand, it is characterized by informal connections between the countries of departure and destination such as kinship, clannishness, friendship and "mutual obligations stemming from the shared community of origin". The presence of such connections or the social capital, as defined by Morawska (2007), augments the probability of migration because it increases the security of travel and successful job search (Morawska, 2007: 6; King, 2012: 21) and serves as a way of risk diversification (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 449), thus affecting positively the migration processes (King, 2012: 23). Moreover, when the socio-economic conditions in the sending country improve, migration tendencies are sustained by the networks (Morawska, 2007: 6). Anyhow, the second perspective of the social network capital is very relevant

to the Tajik labour migration context since all of the abovementioned connection lines are traditionally an extremely important part of interpersonal relations in Tajikistan.

All in all, since the structuration model of international migration is a synthesis of various theoretical approaches, their elements may pop up during the application of the model depending on the object of the analysis. Theories, presented above, are seen as being the most relevant for the analysis of the Tajik case and will thus be discussed in more details in the analytical part.

### **3.2. Structuration model of international migration**

As mentioned earlier the structuration model of international migration was developed in order to provide a tool for a comprehensive analysis of factors which motivate people to move beyond borders within various migration cases. The underlying idea of the model lies in the “process of mutual (re)construction” between the society and individual, in which the society affects the individuals, their decisions and actions, while individuals, in turn, shape the society (Morawska, 2007: 12).

The model introduces two categories: the social structure and the human agency.

Structures in this model are the “social relations (including economic and political) and cultural formations” which happen in daily interaction between different social actors. They can be of different character, dynamics, durability and scope. Since the structures are multiple, they interact with each other on a different scale and with different levels of effectiveness, thus creating contradictions, gaps and loopholes which in turn “enable and constrain the human agency” (*Ibid.*). Structures are presented by macro- and local-level factors driving international migration (see Figure 1).

The upper structural level is described by the *macro-level* conditions which create possibilities and limits for peoples’ actions (*Ibid.*). Since Morawska (2007) apply political, economic and cultural factors those three dimensions will be used for the analysis of macro-level factors behind Tajik labour migration. Also for the purpose of the thesis the term “macro-level” will be referred to the global context which shapes the international labour migration from Tajikistan.

“Lower down the time-space scale” is the closer surrounding with which an individual interacts, gets the information, makes the evaluation of the situation, makes decisions and undertakes actions (King, 2012: 28). These define the *local-level* factors and in this thesis will mainly refer to the conditions for migration which are specific to either the country of departure or the country of destination.

The borderline between the macro- and the local-level factors is often blurred. Some of the factors can be fairly shifted between the two levels or belong to both of them. However, for the purpose of this research, factors which were particularly peculiar to one of the countries and (or) could be



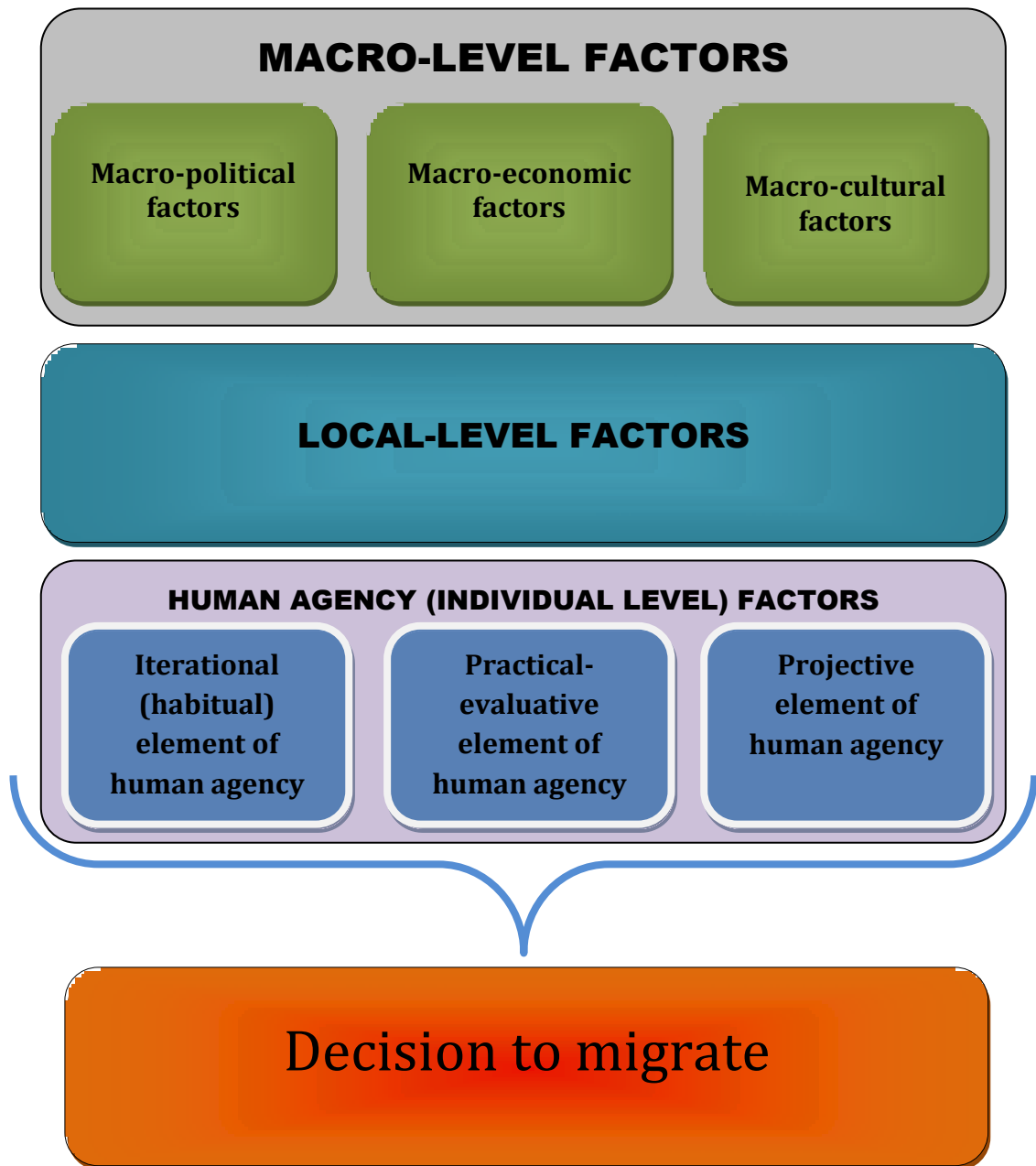
consciously considered by migrants during the decision making were analysed as the local ones. At the same time the factors which might not have direct impact on the decision making were put into the macro-level group.

In turn human agency is “people’s ability to make and act on their own life choices” (Kabeer, 2005: 14). Emirbayer and Mische (1998) provide an important addition to the mentioned definition stating that human agency is a daily “engagement by individuals of different structural environment which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgement, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing situations.” (*Idem*: 970-972 in Morawska, 2007: 12). As seen from the latter definition the agency entails three main elements: firstly, habit to use the past known patterns of thought and (or) action or *iterational* (or *habitual*) element; secondly, imagination to produce different desired patterns of action or *projective* element; and, finally, judgment and evaluation of different patterns of action which happen in real life situation or *practical-evaluative* element (see Figure 1). During everyday interaction with structural environment all three elements can be involved in decision making with some prevailing, depending on the circumstances. The level of power on one’s agency is dependent on macro- and microstructures that support the decision, such as receiving country’s economic situation, structure of the labour market, migration policies of both receiver and sender states, loopholes of the imperfect structures and attitude towards migrants in the host society (*Idem*: 12-13).

In their actions based on habits, desires, assumptions and evaluations individuals reproduce the structures of social life (not ideally though). Human agency entails the knowledge about certain rules and control over resources as well as corresponding ability to apply them in action. Morawska (2007) argues that actions at the low individual level (*i.e.* human agency) may or may not impact the low-level structures in the short term and potentially upper-level structures in the long run (*Ibid.*).

Finally, the author mentions the factors which can sustain the migration case. They can either be the ones which triggered off the migration and persisted through the years of movement or arise in the course of the process (*Idem*: 24). Factors, contributing to the sustainability of Tajik labour emigration will be discussed in the separate section of the analytical chapter.

Schematically the complex of factors of different levels which drive a particular case of international migration can be represented by the diagram below (see Figure 1). This diagram will be also used for the analysis of the Tajik external labour migration.



**Figure 1.** Schematic presentation of structuration model of international migration  
(Source: designed by the author)

Thus, the structuration theoretical model does not give preference to structures as the element which defines the factors and decisions to migrate; neither it states that it is human agents who shape the structures. According to Morawska (2007), what migrants do in the end is shaped by mutual interaction between structures and human agency in a particular moment of time and space (*Idem*: 13). She argues that this theoretical model is of particular use “for interpretation of the pursuits of (im)migrants who move into or between different environments and confront new circumstances” (*Ibid.*) as well as suitable to be empirically applied to international migration contexts because it grasps the complex mutual interaction between the structures and actions of human agents and is specific to different time and space contexts (King, 2012: 28).

The advantages of application of this model are as follows: firstly, it helps to grasp the existing and newly emerging factors of migration discussed within previous theoretical models and secondly, it puts together the macro-, the local- and the individual level (human agency) factors which define a particular migration context (Morawska, 2007: 14).

## **4. Methodology**

The methodological chapter contains the following parts. It starts with the introduction of philosophical stance used in the thesis. Second section discusses the research design followed by the reflexivity and positionality of the author. Next section provides the description of the field work focusing on data type, sampling strategy and selection criteria as well as interviewing process. Fifth section describes the analytical procedures applied. Finally, the last three sections are devoted to ethical considerations, validity and reliability and limitations of the research.

### **4.1. Philosophical stance**

Coming to Tajikistan with just a general interest in the issue of external labour migration I spent some time searching of a more specific research topic. Applying what Silverman and Marvasti (2008: 104-106) called simplistic inductivism helped me to overcome the problem of choosing the topic which interested me most. Being exposed to the country context I was able to make a personal touch, look for new ideas and find out new dimensions of the problem which had already been researched but, at the same time, could have gained new aspects. As suggested by Creswell (2007: 19), in my study I used inductive logic, changing and adapting my research topic on the basis of my experience in the field and following my perspectives of the inquirer.

In this study I stick to ontology and epistemology influenced by the assumptions of post positivism and social constructivism. The former is reflected in the fact that I believe in reality out there and that there are certain laws behind the processes governing the world. The practical application of this philosophical approach has also found reflection in the following: the theory framework was tested with the help of the collected data (Cresswell, 2009: 7-8).

At the same time constructivist philosophical stance helped me to better understand how the migrant workers and their families construct their reality as well as to grasp the subjective meaning of what was happening in the world around them. The latter helped to identify the meanings of their actions and see how their decisions were influenced by their surroundings, historical preconditions and (or) cultural norms (Cresswell, 2007: 20-21).

### **4.2. Research design**

To better study the context and research the problem, learn how people understand and act (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008: 14) as well as get the opportunity to “hear silenced voices”

(Creswell, 2007: 40) a qualitative method of research was chosen. The latter was also seen as way of empowering those who owned those voices (Kvale, 2006).

The research was designed as a case study of labour migration occurring from Tajikistan as bounded system within the context of global labour force migration which used different sources of information (Cresswell, 2007: 73).

### **4.3. Reflexivity and positionality**

According to Sultana (2007: 376), reflexivity shows the place of the researcher within the power structures and thus influences the methods, as well as the ways the knowledge is produced and interpreted.

Coming from a more economically developed, but “friendly neighbouring” country; having a good education and personal touch of different nationalities and cultures; sharing of recent common heritage with the locals made me feel very controversial at times. My feelings varied from confidence in my abilities and empathy to the respondents, to being sorry that I was better off and hence uncomfortable during the communication.

Being Belarus national helped to open many doors during my field work though. First days of stay in Tajikistan gave me a feeling that sharing of common Soviet origin made those who communicated with me very welcoming. Although much is known about Russia; Belarus for Tajik people, except for some basic facts, still remains a little bit of a mystery located somewhere far away. This fact created some sense of curiosity among my respondents. It also facilitated establishment of rapport during the interviews since it was quite usual for people to ask me questions about the life in my home country, making comparisons to what was happening in Tajikistan and (or) Russia, recollecting and sometimes regretting (by a few older respondents) “better days when there were no borders, no prejudices and diverse nations lived as one big family”. Although I was frequently treated as “almost local anyways”, revealing the fact that I came to Tajikistan as a student of Swedish university sometimes created a psychological borderline between me and my respondents since many of them were even less aware about Sweden than Belarus. I had a feeling that this played against me. Having a strict distinction between West and East, between “us and them” the interviewees adapted their behavior in accordance with their views about the Western society and considered me as “an insider, outsider, both and neither” (Sultana, 2007: 377).

Obviously decent knowledge of my native language among Tajiks (except for a couple of cases when I had to use the assistance of an interpreter) facilitated the dialogue.

Finally, given that Tajikistan is a male dominated society, being a male Russian speaking student from the former Soviet republic was a good mixture of assets helping to negotiate my fieldwork, establish bridges for dialogue and collect the data.

## **4.4. Field work**

### **4.4.1. Data type**

As suggested by Creswell (2007: 132), the data collected for the thesis included multiple forms such as secondary data (published academic articles and reports of international organisations) and the primary one. The latter consisted of unstructured open ended interviews with labour migrants and their families; discussions with academia and development practitioners; observations from the field.

All in all I conducted 24 interviews with the target population based on the abovementioned criteria, a number of meetings with scholars and development practitioners, many discussions with locals who either worked abroad themselves or had relatives and familiars as migrant workers.

### **4.4.2. Sampling strategy and selection criteria**

The research employed purposeful sampling strategy (*Idem*: 127). The following selection criteria were identified: the interviewees should be either workers who had gone for employment outside of the country and had earned enough money to be able to send some home or their direct family members. Another criterion was the requirement to be externally employed during the last 5 years (after the global economic crisis which had taken place in 2009).

Access to the field was organized through the personal connections (including my study programme alumni network) *i.e.* informal channels. Local researchers as gatekeepers helped me with finding the respondents according to the abovementioned criteria. Identification of new respondents within the same neighbourhood sometimes happened via the snowball effect.

### **4.4.3. Interviewing**

Although Creswell (2007: 125) suggests getting formal permissions for interviews as an important tool for data collection and rapport, it was hardly possible in Tajikistan. Firstly, controversial information was provided by the development practitioners and researchers on how to actually obtain the research permit in Tajikistan. Bureaucratic complexity and long decision making process were among the factors preventing me from choosing that path. Secondly, and which is more important, Tajikistan is considered as not “free” country with low opportunity for local population to enjoy their fundamental rights and express their views (Freedom House, 2014). There is an uncovered reluctance of local population to take part in interviews and say what they really think. Hence getting a written permission could have ruined all efforts to make a dialogue and consequently undermine the quality of interviews from the start. Aware of these circumstances the

gatekeepers negotiated the interviews informally and this proved to be an important part of data collection process (Scheyvens and Storey, 2003: 82). Therefore, I was asking for an oral consent before starting the interview.

Semi-structured interviews were initially chosen as a mode of the interviewing process. The draft questionnaire contained approximately 24 questions. However, during the first interviews it turned out that some of the questions can be omitted or skipped since they replicate the information which the interviewees provide while elaborating on their past experiences. Therefore, it was decided to shift to the unstructured open-ended interviews around the several topics helpful for my research (see Appendix). This way I gave the respondents the opportunity to be story tellers taking the role of an active listener. If required I was asking additional clarifying questions to help the interviewees elaborate on their stories.

The same concern of respondents regarding the provision of written consent made me avoid the audio recording. Hence I was only making written notes during the interviews (however, in one case the respondent did not allow me to make any written notes during the interview either and asked to write down that person's story later from my memory). At the start of each interview I thanked the person for spending one's time for the interview with me. That as well as a couple of unrelated small talk questions helped me "to break the ice" and start the conversation. I then assured the interviewee of anonymity of the provided information (my interview notes did not have names but numbers. At the same time I had a separate list of names corresponding to the interview number which helped me to visually recollect the people I was talking to and the circumstances of the interview), briefly presented myself and the purpose of the interview, and proceeded to the questions.

Some of the interviews were conducted in the houses of the gatekeepers where I was allocated separate rooms to meet the respondent while others were arranged in the places where respondents lived. In the majority of the cases I was speaking to the people one on one although in the couple of cases the gatekeepers helped me with interpretation since the respondents could not speak Russian well.

#### **4.5. Analysis**

Written notes in Russian were conducted during the interviews. These included not only the information provided by the respondents but also my observations, for example, my feelings about the way the person was answering the questions, the emotions and immediate reactions which accompanied the answers. Detailed field notes helped, among others, to "identify practical concerns, conditions, and constraints that people confront and deal with in their everyday lives and actions" (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008: 216). Expanded field notes were made in English as soon as field work sessions were finished (*Idem*: 219).

The analysis of the data was based on the generic form of analysis as described by Cresswell (2009). This approach involved collecting of the data, analyzing it according to emergent themes and using those themes for reporting and discussion (Cresswell, 2009: 194-201). The data analysis also included data reduction which implied focusing on the most relevant data for the research, data display in the form of drawing of schematic connections between the relevant categories in order to identify causal flows and, finally, making conclusions on the basis of those identified causal flows (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008: 221).

#### **4.6. Ethical considerations**

Several ethical dilemmas, arose during the interviewing process, some expected and some not (Silverman and Marvasti, 2008: 311).

For example, in case the interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents I was always offered tea, snacks and even meals at times. I did not feel very comfortable accepting them being aware about the difficult situations those people live in. However, I could not reject either not to offend the hosts giving due respect to famous central Asian traditions of hospitality.

Another issue of my concern was potential reluctance of the respondents to answer the questions which in my culture were considered private and not always appropriate, such as about the amount of money they had been making in labour migration and sending back home. Luckily that concern was superfluous since my interviewees were always willing to answer such question. The latter could be probably explained by the fact that in this regard I was treated as an outsider who played to my advantage.

An unexpected ethical issue was that some of the respondents were asking whether and how the findings of my research could in the future be considered and (or) incorporated in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects and (or) programmes and how the labour migrants and their families could benefit from that. In such situations I tried to explain in a diplomatic manner that the research was not directly related to my internship with UNDP, that such issues are beyond my control, thus preventing any expectations of the respondents on the matter. Hence, I tried to not reveal the information about my internship place (unless specifically asked for) in order to avoid interviews with a guided answers or so called “contaminated” interviews (*Ibid.*).

#### **4.7. Validity and reliability**

As suggested by Cresswell (2007: 208) the data was validated via triangulation. Different sources of data collection helped in this regard. They included: 1) the gatekeepers. The latter personally knew the respondents so after the interviews were finished I usually asked the gatekeepers to share some information about the respondents and provide their vision about the stories of the respondents’ lives; 2) the academia. I had meetings with several well known Tajik scholars who researched on the issues of labour migration. Those took place both at the start and the end of the

data collection process. Hence I had a chance to verify my presumptions before I started meeting the respondents and get some comments on my reflections when I undertook all the interviews; 3) development workers, particularly the relevant staff member of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM); 4) fellow researchers; as well as 5) documents and academic articles.

Reliability can be considered as one of the weaknesses of the study since, as mentioned earlier, for the sake of being able to conduct informative interviews I opted for not recording the conversations with the participants. In order to avoid this shortcoming I wrote as much information as was said by the respondents (luckily they were kind enough to devote as much of their time as I needed), put down interesting quotations ensuring precise wording and made notes of my personal reflections on the margins. The notes were carefully translated and transcribed into narratives as soon as each interview session was finished.

#### **4.8. Limitations**

The issue of reliability can bear some limitations to the study since some of the particularities given during the interviews could have been omitted in the course of the data interpretation. However, this should not have made significant implications for the research since the generic form of analysis was used (Cresswell's, 2009: 194-201).

Main limitation of the research is the fact that all interviewed respondents resided in the capital city of Dushanbe and the village Luchob in its vicinity. It is partially related to complications with travelling in Tajikistan in winter time and related security precautions.

Therefore, the results of the study cannot represent the population of the whole country. However, as stated by Bryman (2012: 406), the findings can be generalized in relation to the theory thus corresponding to the purpose of the research.

### **5. Analysis**

This section is devoted to the analysis of the factors which mobilize the Tajik population to move abroad in search of employment. As mentioned earlier the analysis will empirically apply the structuration model of international migration of Ewa Morawska (2007). The factors behind external labour migration from Tajikistan will be divided according to the categories of the model they belong to, the namely structures and the human agency. The structures will, in turn, be considered through the macro-level structures (economic, political and cultural) and the local-level structures, while the human agency level at which individual decision to migrate are made will entail iterational, projective and practical-evaluative elements. This will be followed by discussion of factors sustaining migration flows out of Tajikistan. In order to give a visual reflection of the drivers of Tajik labour migration the findings will be summarized in a diagram (see Figure 2). Finally, the chapter will end with the discussion of the findings.



## 5.1. Macro-level factors

As suggested by Morawska (2007) the analysis begins with the discussion of the macro-level factors, since they reflect the conditions initiating the movement of migrant workers as well as delineate the borders in which decisions to move are made (Morawska, 2007: 14).

The *macro-economic* conditions, which, according to Ravenstein's law of international migration, are the main factor driving transnational movement of people, can be well described using Lee's push-pull theory.

Thus, on the one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union which resulted in the independence of Tajikistan was followed by the civil war, destruction of industry and agriculture, hindered economic development and subsequent integration of Tajikistan into the global economy. All of these pushed Tajik workers to seek employment abroad.

On the other hand, Olimova and Bosc (2003) also emphasize the importance of the following two pull factors behind the Tajik labour emigration. Firstly, stable demand for human labour in Russia. Lack of local human resources due to low birth rates and high death rates as well as lack of mobility of the local labour force created a free space in the Russian labour market and the need for external workers. Secondly, during the last decade of the XXth century the Russian Federation underwent major structural reforms accompanied by an increase in wages and rise of a housing market. Also the country's economy experienced strengthening of extracting and processing industries. Added to construction those industries needed a lot of male workers. Two-third of job announcements at the official job hiring services of that time frame (*i.e.* second half of 1990s) aimed at hiring industrial workers. According to the study the professional knowledge and skills of Tajik workers coincided well with demands of Russian labour market. Labour migrants from Tajikistan filled the positions in the construction, gas and oil extracting, engineering and metallurgical industries. This was also accompanied by the outflow of Russian workers to European Union and decline of the inflow of workers from other Post Soviet countries, namely the Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia. So, Tajiks filled their positions as well (Olimova and Bosc, 2003: 23).

A number of additional pull factors which do not stand independently but support the major ones mentioned above, include established economic connections between Russia and Tajikistan as well favourable transportation routes leading to the country of destination.

The former are described as partner links which existed between the enterprises of the two countries during the Soviet era. Those links facilitated employment in the receiving country. Finally, the shift system of employment organized during the Soviet period in some industrial sectors was used when the Soviet Union broke down. Thus, the Tajiks were getting the job at the same enterprises of gas and oil extracting and energy sector, which they used to go on shift in the past (*Ibid.*).

In turn railroad end points leading from Dushande to Astrakhan and Volgograd with the latter being also an important transit hub on the route to Moscow became the “magnet” places where many Tajik workers found employment and created large communities. Several bus routes were opened to Siberian cities Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk thus contributing to the increase of Tajik communities there (*Ibid.*). All of those cities were mentioned as the places of employment during this study. Interestingly, that some of the respondents managed to work in several Russian cities mentioned above in search for better opportunities throughout their live (including Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg and Krasnoyarsk). Generally the study confirmed that favourable transportation routes still represent a mechanism facilitating the international labour migration from Tajikistan and defining its geographical directions. It also reflects on the reluctance of migrants to move beyond the geographical borders and corridors defined by the fellow countrymen ties and transformational routes.

The *macro-political* context is characterized by the relatively easy access to the main countries of destination for Tajik workers. With the only exception of Uzbekistan, neither Russia, Kazakhstan nor Kyrgyzstan require entry visas from Tajik national (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, n. d.).

A number of bilateral agreements and legal documents were developed in order to protect Tajik nationals and facilitate their stay in Russia. For example, in 2004, a law on social protection of Tajik citizens was introduced in Russia. It aimed at providing them with access to health insurances. In 2013 a bilateral agreement signed between Russia and Tajikistan increased the duration of stay of Tajiks in Russia without obligatory registration from 7 to 15 days (from the date of entry into the country). At the moment a protocol allowing Tajik national to get up to 3 year work permits and the extension of temporary stay period without leaving the country was signed between the two countries and is awaiting its ratification in the Russian parliament (OECD, 2015: 35).

The *macro-cultural* factors of international migration also play an important role within the study. Firstly, these are described by shared common history between the sending and the receiving countries. Secondly, macro-cultural factors are also characterized by knowledge of Russian which is a *lingua franca* within the post soviet countries.

Based on the results of the collected data it can be noted that the older generation of migrant workers are better adapted for international travel within the given macro-cultural context. They associate the Soviet period of Tajik history with a joint country and much better living conditions compared to what they have now, thus still considering international travel as a movement between two republics of one bigger country. Also they had a chance to be more exposed to intercultural environment and interaction with people of different nationalities than younger generation since there were many ethnic Russians in Tajikistan before the collapse of the Soviet

Union. It was also quite common that during the military service Tajiks were serving in remote parts of USSR together with national of other republics.

Knowledge of Russian is also an asset (the older generation has advantage in this regards over the younger one). However, the study showed that it is not critical for making decision to move abroad since many jobs which are filled by Tajik are labour intensive and do not require advanced language skills. Moreover, according to the collected data people often travel to join their friends, relatives, neighbours, acquaintances and work together with them (none of the respondents went to work abroad on his/her own). Thus, working in teams of fellow countrymen on positions which do not require a lot of advanced communication with the locals makes the ability to speak decent Russian not that crucial. Nevertheless, the better knowledge of Russian the more employment options as well as better chances for advancement one have. The study also revealed that migrants with good knowledge of Russian are better aware of the regulations of Russian labour market and, thus, can better adapt to the changing legislative environment they work in. Therefore, the importance of knowledge of Russian should not be underestimated.

## 5.2. Local-level factors

In contrast to macro-level, *local-level* factors are closer on time- and space- scale of specific conditions which define the decisions to travel abroad. These will be analysed from both sending and receiving (namely Russia) countries' perspective.

If one looks at the factors from Tajikistan as a country of departure perspective it is obvious that complicated economic situation in Tajikistan is the main factor which pushes local workers to seek jobs outside its borders. Despite the recently witnessed economic growth, the economy of the country dependent on export of cotton and aluminum was struck by the global economic crisis. Corruption and unattractive investment climate hindered development of small and medium scale businesses, and thus creation of new jobs. No jobs, low wages and absence of any visible economic prospects leave no choice to young active male Tajiks but to look for employment abroad (IOM, 2014: 7).

*“In Russia I was doing apartment renovations. So I came back home and wanted to do the same. I placed a sticker advertising my services at the back window of my car the same way everybody did in Krasnodar [Russia]. But I was immediately stopped by the road police who told me to take it off without explaining why”* (male respondent, 28 years old).

Given the importance of remittances in terms of reduction of poverty, improving the living standards and economy of Tajikistan in general, the state itself “pushes” locals to seek jobs abroad. Thus, for example, the Government of Tajikistan developed a National Strategy for Labour

Migration of the Citizens of the Republic of Tajikistan Abroad for 2011–2015 which aimed at creating favourable conditions for external migrations (*Ibid.*).

It is obvious that expectations of earning higher wages in Russia can be considered as the main pull factor of the receiving country which is driving labour migration flows out of Tajikistan. The Russian labour market is a good reflection of what is described within segmented labour market theory (King, 2012: 16-17; Morawska, 2007: 2-3; Massey *et al.*, 1993: 440-444). Firstly, being 30 times higher than in Tajikistan (Olimova and Bosc, 2003: 22), Russian average monthly salary has always attracted Tajik workers as a magnet. Secondly, such wages are offered within low skill labour intensive positions many of which are at the bottom of the status ladder in Russia and are not very attractive among the local population. Tajik migrants, in turn, are willing to occupy those positions since they are driven solely by economic interests and see such employment opportunities as a way to improve their status and well-being at home. Moreover, the low status of such jobs among the locals do not bother them since they don't consider themselves as a part of the host society, but rather a part of the Tajik community for which such work is considered normal and the opportunity to send home remittances as an honorable one (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 442).

As collected data showed the interviewed respondents made on average some 25,000-30,000 Russian roubles (approximately 700-850 US dollars according to the official exchange rate (Central Bank of the Russian Federation, 2014)). Respondents made this money at construction, apartment renovation. The jobs also included construction and storehouse guards, box packers and carriers at the market, staff of tyre fitting shops, car wash, *etc.* Around one third of this sum was reportedly spent for food and accommodation, while most of the rest sent back home in the form of remittances. The study also revealed that job opportunity to make half the size of the abovementioned salary at home would prevent the respondents from seeking employment abroad.

*"If I had a chance to make 300-400 US dollars in Tajikistan, I would not go to work to Russia"* (male respondent, 29 years old).

*"I am not going to work here [Tajikistan] for 500-600 Somoni [appr. 100-120 US dollars] since all my salary will be spent on commuting between work and home"* (male respondent, 30 years old).

*"I could stay if I could make some 3,000 Somoni [appr. 600 US Dollars] a month (e.g. at office jobs)"* (male respondent, 27 years old).

*I want to find a job for at least 1,000 Somoni [appr. 200 US Dollars]. Making less does not make any sense, all the money would be spent on commuting, so I better stay unemployed at home* (a female wife of migrant worker, 46 years old).

### 5.3. Individual level factors

*Individual level* factors will be viewed through the human capital and their agency which influenced the decisions to leave Tajikistan (Morawska, 2007: 18).

The study showed that the human capital of Tajik labour migrants is characterized by low level of education and lack of professional skills with many migrants leaving right after the graduation from school. The only asset worth mentioning is knowledge of Russian language, although the level may vary. Interestingly, that even those who possess high or secondary technical training are tied within social networks and often end up doing the same low skilled jobs as their worse educated peers.

Moving to the *decisions* of Tajiks it should be noted that all three dimensions of agency were involved in their decision to lean towards migration. These dimensions interconnect very closely though. As study showed the decisions to move are usually made at the family level. Traditionally the right for the final decision is held by the elder member of the family.

The *iterational or habitual* element as “the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thoughts and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 970-972 in Morawska, 2007: 12) is well reflected by what Morawska (2007) calls “deeply internalized culture of migration” (Morawska, 2007: 23) at both the local level and the individual level. According to the collected data almost every local has either neighbours, relatives or familiars working abroad. This fact makes it not surprising that those who consider leaving are influenced by numerous witnessed examples of successful labour migrants within their surrounding who were able to find jobs outside of Tajikistan and earned enough to support themselves and their families back home through remittances.

*“When I was finishing school I did not consider any future opportunities other than going to work to Russia, since so many friends from my neighbourhood did the same before and many of my classmates planned to do the same after the graduation”* (male respondent, 31 years old).

The habitual mentality is also reinforced in the case of previous labour migration experience among direct members of the family.

*“My father and my brothers were already working in Moscow so I planned to join them”* (male respondent, 28 years old).

Even though the travelling to work abroad is perceived as a negative factor by female members of the family it is still considered as the primary employment opportunity thanks to internalised traditions of migration.

*“Generally I don’t want anyone from our family to go abroad, especially I don’t want my husband to do so. However, labour migration of my son [15 years old] could be the only opportunity for us to make normal living”* (female respondent whose husband is working abroad and son is about to graduate from school, 39 years old).

The statements above also describe well one of the aspects of *practical-evaluative* component of decision making which described as “the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgements among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 970-972 in Morawska, 2007: 12-13). This component is closely interconnected with the previous one in the following manner. Not only the examples of external employment among relatives and neighbours form a tradition of labour migration but they also represent a risk diminishing factor for those travelling for the first time. The presence of well established support networks of familiars and relatives abroad facilitate accommodation and job search, provide information on correct completion of the paperwork required for legal employment, help to adjust during the initial period of stay in the receiving country. Those who made multiple travels have established a good supporting network which facilitates all aspects of their travels (*e.g.* places of stay, possibility to return to the same job after trips home, awareness of best opportunities to transfer remittances, *etc.*).

Another important practical factor, as study showed, is the opportunity to use bank transfers for sending remittances. Having become popular during the last decade (Kireyev, 2006 in Justino and Shemyakina, 2012: 11), it significantly reduced the risk of being robbed or bribed at the border or simply losing the money during stay abroad or on the way back home. A necessity to pay a relatively low fee of 1 per cent (Ganguli, 2009: 3) overweighed the risk of travelling with the cash as was previously done by the migrants.

The *projective* element of the agency reflects “the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and actions may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears and desires for the future” (*Ibid.*). According to the collected data these include primarily expectations to meet basic consumption needs like food, clothes, payments for accommodation, medical care, *etc.*

Secondly, complying with the study made by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2014: 15-16), seasonal employment in Russia is also considered as a way to earn and save some extra to be later used on an *ad hoc* basis. For example, the study showed that purchase of a car (appr. 15 years old car worth 3,000-3,500 US Dollars) is quite popular expenditure which can serve multiple purposes. Firstly, as means of transportation. Secondly, as business opportunity of illegal taxi. Thirdly, way of depositing the money, since the car is purchased when the working season

ends, used during stay at home and sold before a new trip abroad (although it is sold cheaper but still enough to cover travel expenses).

Other popular *ad hoc* reasons which motivate Tajiks to leave their home country are closely connected to the traditions of the Tajik society. They include weddings and, to some extent, construction of houses for living. For example, weddings are supposed to have big and rich ceremonies with many guests including big extended families and neighbours irrespective of the well being of the household since conducting them otherwise is considered impolite and can have negative consequences in relations with relatives and neighbours (“they would not understand it”). Therefore, many young men work abroad with the intention to earn for a wedding (although often they continue going to work abroad afterwards). It is not rare that elder family members also save money to contribute to the wedding of their younger siblings.

*“My remittances were spent for renovation of the house, my wedding, my sister’s wedding and some minor things. Now my father and elder brother went to work abroad to make money for my younger brother’s wedding”* (male respondent, 27 years old).

*“During his first trip abroad some 15 years ago my husband was making money for his marriage and was not coming back until he made enough”* (female respondent, 37 years old).

*“We planned that our daughter would get married after school so we saved the remittances for the wedding”* (female respondent, 46 years old).

*“Money from my previous trips were spent on my sister’s and my brother’s weddings”* (male respondent, 28 years old).

Another example is housing: according to the traditions it is the younger son who is staying in the parents’ place and look after them when they are old. So the elder siblings are supposed to leave the place when the younger son gets married. This motivates the elder male members of the family to build or buy their own homes.

*“I need to earn money to move away from my parents, since at some point my younger brother gets married and I’ll have to leave”* (male respondent, 31 years old).

To sum up, the study showed the presence of all three agentic dimensions within the migration decision making process. The literature suggests that predominance of a particular aspect is determined circumstances of particular cases (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 970-972 in Morawska, 2007: 13). For example, in some cases predominance of habitual mentality, namely presence of family members working abroad or examples of successful labour migration within the neighbourhood become the main driving factors behind the decision to travel. At the same time in

other cases, the decisions are taken based on the necessity to make money for specific purposes like marriages or accommodation, *i.e.* driven by the projective element.

Specific drivers of migration can also change over time within cases, for instance desire to make money for wedding is later shifted to the necessity to earn enough for the regular consumption needs of the newly created family.

#### 5.4. Sustainability factors

Obviously the necessity to sustain an adequate level of life and (or) meet consumption needs are the main conditions that sustain the labour migration from Tajikistan on the individual level. However, throughout the time scale a new important individual factor has emerged. Migrants who have been frequently travelling for years are gradually losing ties with the home country. This includes loss of social connections and networks as well as low awareness on the practical matters important for everyday living in Tajikistan since migrant workers become more attached to the country of destination in this regard.

*“I have all the connections there [in Russia], and in Tajikistan no one trusts me anymore”*  
(male respondent, 29 years old).

By doing so, the labour migrants (those who do not consider moving to Russia permanently) put themselves under the risk of having difficulties to adjusting to life in Tajikistan when they terminate their travels, since, as previously mentioned, they lose personal connections. Deteriorated health after years of hard manual work, low opportunities for social protection as no contributions to pension funds have been made contribute to the complicated situation.

*“They earn more [in Russia] than people here but they do not have stable work and clear future and what is worse they lose the connections with this country in which they will have to live unless they don’t have intentions to stay in Russia”* (comment from the interview facilitator).

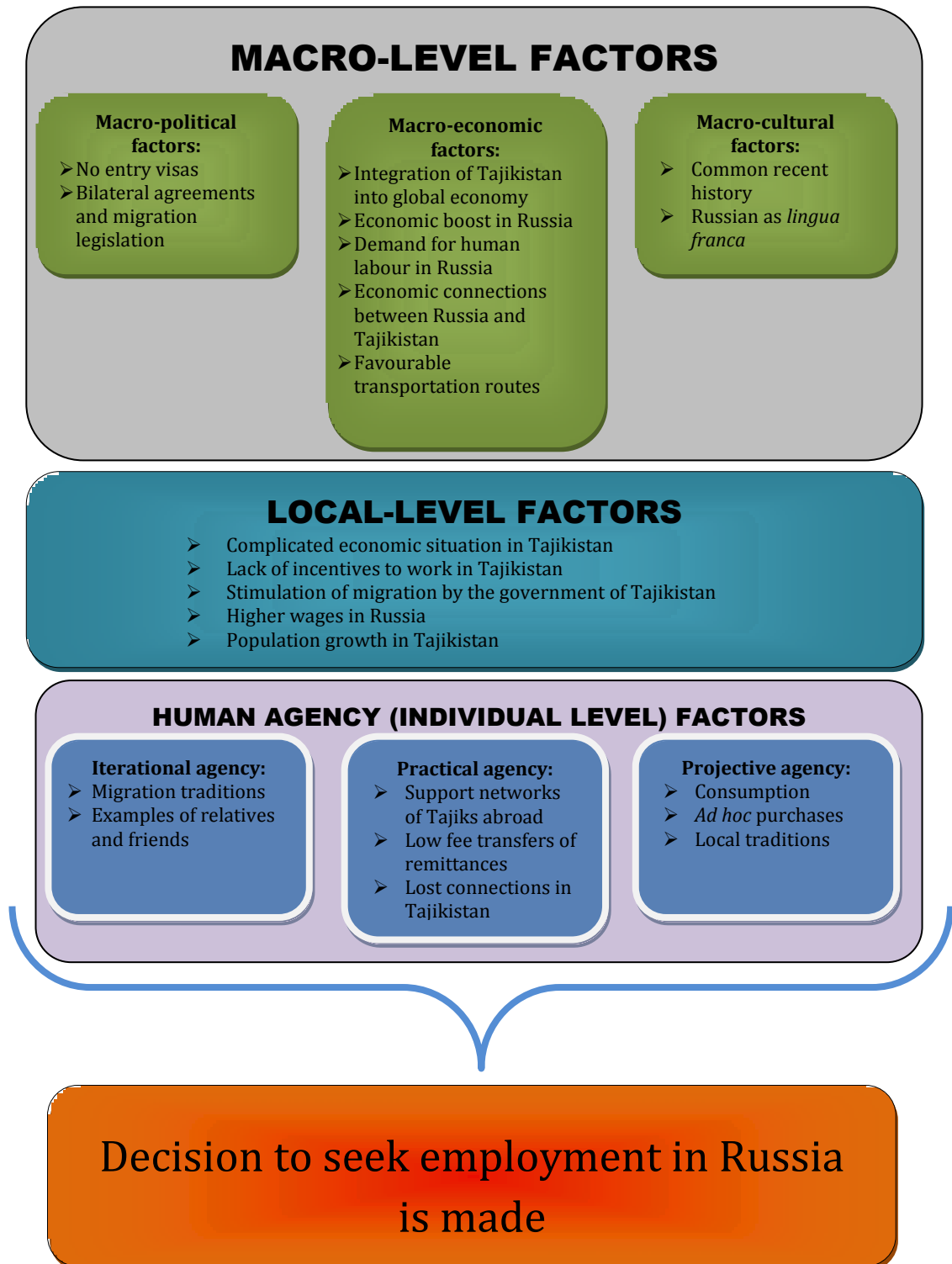
On the local level external labour migration is sustained by the demographic situation in Tajikistan. Olimova and Bosc (2003) argue that the demographic factor is a primary stimulating factor of labour migration in Tajikistan. The natural increase of the population and a large proportion of young people increase the competition in the labour market and puts pressure on living standards. Added to this is the fact that 93 per cent of the territory of Tajikistan is mountainous and the majority of people live in the remaining 7 per cent of river basins which experience the overpopulation (Olimova and Bosc, 2003: 12-13). All of the above contributes to sustainability of labour migration.

While macro-cultural factors can be considered as long term factors sustaining the international migration, the macro-economic conditions might soon change given the pressure of international



economic sanctions put on Russia. The latter might deteriorate the labour market in the country, subsequently giving a negative impact on Tajik labour migrants. This, in turn, can have political implications, for example if Russia decides to impose legal barriers in order to protect its labour market. The abovementioned situation can force changes in the Tajik labour emigration landscape.

Concluding the analysis of the factors behind the external labour migration from Tajikistan, they are schematically presented in the diagram below (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Factors behind Tajik external labour migration (*Source:* designed by the author)

## 5.5. Discussion

The analysis of the data helps to answer the research question:

*“How is external labour migration from Tajikistan shaped and which factors mobilize Tajik migrants to take part in it?”*

As suggested by the analysis the case of the Tajik labour emigration was initiated by the macro-level factors which set the conditions for the movement. In accordance with the basic law of migration, the main role in this regards was played by the economic dimension of the macro-level factors. Inclusion of Tajikistan into the global economy after its independence opened the door for movement to its growing labour force. The latter was willing to satisfy the demand for human labour in Russia which experienced a significant economic growth and required a lot of workers to fill in the empty niches in the labour intensive segment of the labour market. The process was facilitated by easy access to the Russian labour market due to absence of visa requirements, establishment of supportive legal frameworks and favourable transportation routes as well as possibility for quick adaptation, thanks to sharing common historical heritage and knowledge of Russian as *lingua franca* of the former Soviet countries. Despite the fact that the latter is not a factor of crucial importance for working abroad the study showed that possession of good Russian results in better employment and advancement opportunities. This is added to better knowledge and understanding of labour migration legislative framework and ability to faster adapt to the changes in regulations.

Lack of opportunities and incentives to work in Tajikistan created the grounds for the outer migration. Unable to make enough means to fully meet their basic needs and sustain their livelihoods, Tajik citizens are attracted by higher earnings in Russia and do not bother much about the conditions and status of possible employment opportunities. In turn, given the importance of remittances for Tajik economy, external migration is stimulated by its own government which incorporates measures promoting and facilitating external migration into the state development programme and international legislation.

However, it is at the individual level where decisions to move are finally made. Put under the abovementioned circumstances, and given the already established traditions of migration which in some cases are inherited by younger generations of Tajiks, they evaluate the option of staying home versus seeking employment abroad. The decision to choose the latter significantly overweighs since it is reinforced by numerously witnessed examples of relatives, friends and neighbours who were able to earn enough to support themselves abroad and their families at home. Presence of large networks of fellow Tajiks abroad and the possibility to cheaply transfer the remittances diminish the risk of staying unemployed and ensure the safety of earnings correspondingly. Work in Russia is the easiest solution to meet general consumption needs, purchase *ad hoc* things and, which is

sometimes more important, maintain local Tajik traditions. Even those Tajik nationals who are able to sustain their livelihood without leaving Tajikistan and (or) accept a modest way of life are often forced to make working trips abroad in order to correspond to the image dictated by the traditions and people from the closer surrounding. The risk of being ashamed in the eyes of extended family members and neighbours becomes the motivation behind moving abroad.

Although the process of Tajik labour emigration is still sustained by the same macro-level factors which have launched it, some individual level sustaining factors occurred. For example, lost social connections in their home country by those labour migrants who have been travelling for years make them reluctant to search for opportunities in Tajikistan. This makes them choose migration as an option for sustaining their livelihoods.

What started as a survival strategy, caused by the civil war and economic hardship, has turned into a newly emerged type of migrant for whom periodic travel to work abroad has become a way of life (Olimova and Bosc, 2003: 122). A certain culture of migration has been formed throughout two decades of independence. "Working abroad" is considered a primary life strategy by some respondents who consider it over other options, for example, obtaining high education or seeking work in the home country.

*"...if they [the children of the respondent] decide they don't want to study we are not going to force them... Generally, I have no idea if my son is going to enter university after graduation or go abroad."* (female respondent, 39 years old).

Even realising the potential risks and shortcomings of such life strategy, some respondents are constrained by the complexity of factors at individual level and have no other option but to "flow with the stream".

*"We have a lot of debts... some money were also borrowed to make another trip abroad... ..it would be better if my husband worked here [in Tajikistan]. But, basically, we flow with the stream."* (female respondent , 37 years old).

The interdependent nature of different elements of structuration model can be described as following. What started at the macro-level, which gave the impulse to labour migration from Tajikistan and shaped its limits, have in a couple of decades emerged in traditions of migration, directly supported by the state and indirectly by the population growth at the local level. These traditions are inherited by new generations of Tajiks at the individual level. The individual decisions reinforced by traditions and driven by economic needs cause the constantly increasing number of those willing to move and challenge new circumstances. In turn, Russia as the recipient country has to carefully monitor the situation with increasing flows of immigrants and respond to it accordingly by regulating them. For example, establishment of barriers to incoming labour

migration can change the geographical directions chosen by Tajik labour migrants who might opt for other proximate countries like Kazakhstan, China, *etc.* or chose the informal migration and shadow employment in Russia. Such scenarios can be elaborated further on, affecting all layers of factors. By doing so, researchers can forecast and predict how changes in particular factors can reshape the whole structure of Tajik labour emigration.

The most important issue to monitor nowadays is the current economic situation in Russia which is hit by sanctions of its partners and the decrease in oil prices. The issue is crucial since it reshapes the dominant migration factors, *i.e.* macro-economic ones. There is a risk of drastic change of the macro-economic factors followed by subsequent negative impact on Tajikistan's economy and its migrant labour force. For example, significant devaluation of Russian rouble will negatively affect the wages and can potentially reduce the incentive of a majority of Tajik workers to move to Russia. In turn, it might also reduce the amount of remittances and, thus, hinder economic situation in Tajikistan. Adapting to new circumstances migrants might choose to go to countries other than Russia, opt to stay in Russia for more extended periods of time leaving families behind, not mentioning involvement into shadow opportunities in the home country. This, in turn, will require new practical considerations such as establishing new support networks and (or) strengthening the existing ones. The recipient countries will respond to the changes in their labour markets, thus making migrants face new challenges and adapt the trajectories of their actions accordingly. The process will among others involve the academia and international organisations in order to study it and suggest corresponding assistance measures.

## **6. Concluding remarks**

In this thesis the drivers behind a widely spread phenomenon of the labour emigration of Tajik nationals were analysed. The structuration model of international migrations proposed by Ewa Morawska (2007) was particularly relevant in answering the research question by categorizing and summarizing the information derived from a variety of sources. The model has provided a systematic approach for the analysis of international migration case of Tajikistan, synthesizing various migration theories and grasping all aspects provided in them.

Firstly, the study concluded that the case of external labour migration from Tajikistan is driven by a complexity of factors which are located at different proximity on the time- and space- scale in relation to individuals who take decision to work abroad. These factors were scrutinized and presented in a schematic diagram.

Secondly, the study revealed the interconnection and interdependence of factors driving Tajik labour migration at different levels of the model. Cause-and-effect relations between the factors

were analysed. The latter analysis was followed by the discussion of potential impacts of current international economic relations on the Tajik labour migration.

As suggested by the model, several interconnected layers of factors were identified. These layers defined the limits of migration, motivated the actions of potential migrants to move and impacted their decisions to choose different trajectories of action.

Although the economic reasons of movement seem to be on the surface the analysis helped to identify other factors and place them at corresponding level of the structuration model.

According to the analysis the following macro-economic factors were considered: inclusion of independent Tajikistan in the global economy; economic growth in Russia and subsequently increased demand for human labour, especially in the labour intensive sectors; economic connections remaining after the collapse of the Soviet Union and favourable transportation routes. These were complemented by the macro-cultural factors of shared Soviet heritage and use of the same language for communication as well as macro-political factors, namely absence of entry barriers in Russia, presence of bilateral legal and internal legal frameworks facilitating migration.

At the local level constantly growing population of Tajikistan does not have many adequate employment options at home due to a difficult economic situation in the country and hence, attracted by higher wages in Russia and stimulated by the government, choose to seek employment abroad.

In doing so individuals are influenced by the established culture of migration in their close surrounding and positive external employment examples within their families. Making practical judgements they rely on the networks of Tajiks present in the destination country in helping them to adapt to a new environment. By travelling to work abroad they aim to earn and save money for traditional things (big wedding ceremonies, helping their parents and relatives, *etc.*); *ad hoc* purchases (accommodation, cars, organisation of small businesses, *etc.*) and (or) regular consumption needs.

All layers are interdependent. The dynamics of limits of each layer influences the conditions of other layers. This process is continuous and gives an opportunity to monitor how the changes in one factor or layer cause changes in other layers.

Further research should focus on the impact of the current economic situation in Russia on Tajik external labour migration since the recession of the Russian economy is a major negative factor that is expected to harm the economy of Tajikistan and have a dramatic effect on its international labour force. For example, it will be interesting to know which sectors, involving Tajik migrant workers, are hit most; whether Tajik migrant workers are hit more or less than the locals; how Tajik migrant workers adapt their life strategies, *etc.* This research can be helpful to identify entry

points and suggest responses to strengthen the capacity of the Tajik population, which highly relies on work emigration and remittances, to withstand the external macro-economic shocks. The latter process requires precise monitoring and analysing of the current situation by researchers and development practitioners. In this regard, the structuration model is suggested as a useful tool for tracing the causal effects between the changed factors and overall impact of the latter process on the Tajik external labour migration.

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## **Appendix: Interview guide**

List of topics to be discussed during the interview:

- 1) Family structure of the respondent.
- 2) Education of the respondent.
- 3) History of labour migration.
  - a. Reasons for initial travel and subsequent trips (if the latter happened).
  - b. Destination country and city (cities) and type of work done.
  - c. Working and living conditions.
  - d. Approximate wages.
  - e. Remittances.
- 4) Problems abroad
- 5) Problems at home.
- 6) Short-term and long-term life plans for self and the family.